

# Commissioner Karen Weldin Stewart Reports The Passage Of The Mini-Cobra Law

Dover – During these difficult economic times, consumers are faced with many challenges. If you were to lose your job, you would likely be forced to determine how, or if, to continue your health insurance. Commissioner Karen Weldin Stewart is happy to report the passage of House Bill 170—the Mini-Cobra Law. On May 22, 2012, Governor Markell signed into law this bill which amends Title 18 of the Delaware Insurance Code relating to group health insurance. This bill requires insurers to offer to otherwise ineligible employee's mini-cobra coverage for small-employer plans. Sponsored by State Senator Brian Bushweller, State Representative Bryon Short, and State Representative Danny Short, Commissioner Stewart and the staff at the Delaware Department of Insurance have worked with members of the General Assembly from the beginning of the 146<sup>th</sup> Session on this piece of legislation. Commissioner Stewart stated that, ***"This law not only protects Delawareans from fear of losing health insurance coverage upon losing employment but it also alleviates stress for many during an uncertain time."***

The Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA) is a federal law, under the direction of the United States Department of Labor, which gives unemployed workers the right to continue their health insurance through a former employer. Although this option requires you to pay the entire premium yourself, it can provide more comprehensive coverage than a more restrictive or costly individual plan. COBRA coverage is typically available for up to 18 months after losing a job, but in some circumstances benefits can be extended for up to 36 months. COBRA applies only to employers of 20 or more

employees, leaving employees of smaller businesses unprotected.

Delaware joins 39 other states that have enacted "Mini-COBRA" laws. Under this new legislation, individuals who have lost their employment and health insurance may qualify for continuation of health insurance coverage for nine months (as long as the employer is still offering health insurance to their active employees). Commissioner Stewart is extremely pleased and proud that the Department of Insurance played an integral role in making this happen. For more information on the mini-cobra law and all other insurance matters, contact the Delaware Department of Insurance at 302-674-7300 or our website, [www.delawareinsurance.gov](http://www.delawareinsurance.gov).